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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SARAJEVO 000773

SIPDIS

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FOR BEIN

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SUBJECT: BOSNIA - SERBS KEEP QUIET AND BOSNIAKS CRY FOUL
AFTER RSNA CONCLUSIONS REPEALED

REF: A. SARAJEVO 733

¶B. 08 SARAJEVO 362

¶C. SARAJEVO 691

Classified By: DCM Judith Cefkin. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. Following HighRep Valentin Inzko's June 20 decision to use the Bonn Powers to annul the Republika Srpska National Assembly (RSNA's) conclusions condemning what the RSNA perceived as the illegal transfer of competencies from the entities to the state (Ref A), Bosnian Serb politicians are predictably angry but have been surprisingly restrained in their public statements. Serb tri-presidency member Nebojsa Radmanovic stressed to the Ambassador on June 23 that the Serbs see Inzko's decision as unfair and believe it constitutes an attempt by OHR to keep itself open. Although Radmanovic believes other Serb politicians share his view of the HighRep's decision, the June 22 visit to the RS of Serbian President Boris Tadic may have helped keep the Serbs -- particularly RS PM Milorad Dodik, who is known for his visceral reactions -- quiet in front of the cameras. By contrast, Bosniaks and Croats are infuriated, claiming that the HighRep should have taken sanctions against not only the conclusions themselves but those responsible for passing them. The conclusions -- and the HighRep's "soft punishment" against them -- have even led moderate Bosniak politician Sulejman Tihic to reconsider efforts on compromise for which his support is crucial. END SUMMARY.

Serbs Stomp Their Feet in Private ...

¶12. (C) Over lunch with the Ambassador on June 23, Radmanovic decried the HighRep's decision to repeal the RSNA conclusions and conveyed the oft-cited SNSD theory that "someone" (meaning the international community) planned the OHR-RSNA standoff to show the PIC that OHR is still necessary and needs to stay open. Radmanovic said that the RSNA passes conclusions like these "all the time," so the PIC is the only explanation for the HighRep's timing on "punishing the RS." He compared the HighRep's decision in this case to the international community's reaction to the February 2008 RSNA declaration on Kosovo (Ref B). The Ambassador reminded Radmanovic that the international community acted in response to the RSNA, not in provocation, and that our objection to the declaration regarded its content, not its form, as a declaration carries no executive authority. The Ambassador stressed that Dodik in this case painted himself into a corner and that despite all our efforts to engage him, he left the HighRep with no choice but to use the Bonn Powers. Radmanovic went on to compare the RSNA conclusions to the SDA platform, which the party adopted at its May congress and

which the Serbs maintain calls for the abolition of entity voting (Note: No such demand exists in the platform. End Note). The Ambassador noted that SDA's paper is simply a party platform, adding that if SNSD, instead of conveying its message through conclusions, had simply parlayed it into a platform, the USG would disagree with it but would not object to its form.

... But Keep Quiet in Public

¶3. (C) Immediately after the HighRep's decision, the RSNA had planned to craft a response -- possibly including an unspecified "plan B" -- at the continuation of its regular session on June 22 (Ref A). However, the RSNA -- at Radmanovic's request, according to Radmanovic -- withdrew this item from the agenda on June 24, coterminous with a marked drop in the Serbs' visceral, public reactions. RSNA Speaker Igor Radojicic told us on June 26 that the RSNA may adopt the conclusions as a declaration -- an alternative that the Ambassador had suggested to Dodik (Ref C) -- but no official discussion has taken place. Meanwhile, RS President Rajko Kuzmanovic returned on June 26 from Moscow, where he consulted with Russian leadership on the conclusions. (Note: Russian Ambassador to Bosnia Konstantin Shuvalov sent a letter to the HighRep on June 20 -- immediately after Inzko annulled the conclusions -- firmly conveying Moscow's objection to Inzko's decision. End Note) Kuzmanovic now is working with RS party leaders to determine the RS's official reaction.

SARAJEVO 00000773 002 OF 003

Tadic Attempts Damage Control

¶4. (SBU) Serbian President Boris Tadic's visit to Banja Luka may have helped quiet Bosnian Serb public reactions. Tadic visited Banja Luka on June 22 -- bypassing Sarajevo and the RS-based Bosniaks, much to their chagrin -- to meet with Dodik, Radojicic, Radmanovic, and the leaders of the RS parties that voted for the conclusions. (Note: According to the RS media, Tadic did not meet with the RS-based Bosniaks because they did not vote for the conclusions. End Note) Afterward, Tadic publicly stated that Serbia, as a party to and "guarantor" of the Dayton Peace Accords, does not accept "imposed solutions" in Bosnia, but rather solutions to which all three constituent peoples agree. He stressed, though, that Serbia "fully respects Bosnia's sovereignty and territorial integrity." Since his meeting with Tadic, Dodik has been uncharacteristically restrained. In sharp contrast to his visceral reactions throughout the vicissitudes of negotiations, Dodik after the HighRep's announcement simply declared that RS officials were surprised by Inzko's decision, although he did add that "this is the last time the HighRep will use the Bonn Powers."

Bosniaks and Croats React Vehemently

¶5. (C) Reactions from Bosniak and Croat parties to Tadic's visit to Banja Luka have been unexpectedly harsh. Party of Democratic Action (SDA) chairman Tihic chastised Tadic for "calling for dialogue in Bosnia" yet not insisting on it in the RS, adding that it is unacceptable that Tadic spoke only with the Serbs "as though no Bosniaks and Croats existed in the RS government." Party for BiH (SBiH) chairman and Bosniak tri-presidency member Haris Silajdzic declared that Tadic's visit was further evidence of "Serbia's violation of Bosnia's sovereignty and integrity since Serbia carried out the aggression in our country." A press release from the Social Democratic Party (SDP) stated that Tadic, by protecting the "illegal and anti-constitutional RSNA conclusions," is questioning the Dayton Peace Agreement. SDP member and Croat tri-presidency member Zeljko Komsic said publicly and to the Ambassador that he deems Tadic's visit

"classic nationalist meddling in Bosnia's internal affairs," opining that Tadic aspires to "Greater Serbia." A report from the RS media indicates that SDP also stated that Tadic's disputing the HR's decision "resembles the principles" of Slobodan Milosevic in "destroying Yugoslavia." Komsic added to the Ambassador that he believed the EU -- whose "inaction" on the RSNA conclusions remained a point of frustration for Komsic -- may well have asked Tadic to come, and said that he did not like the role the EU seemed to have in mind for Serbia as a "policeman" in the region.

Tihic Planning "Next Steps"

¶ 6. (C) An advisor to Tihic tells us that the RSNA conclusions are "the last straw" for Tihic. According to the advisor, Tihic feels disenfranchised by both the Serbs and the international community and is tired of, in his view, OHR's insistence that he make the greatest sacrifices in negotiating with the Serbs (such as continuing to participate in the Prud Agreement, from which Tihic recently withdrew because of the RSNA conclusions and Dodik's subsequent insults toward Tihic). The advisor said that Tihic plans to keep quiet and consult with SDA during the summer in order to devise his "next steps." She found it unlikely, though, that Tihic would take the initiative to extend the olive branch, as he is already gearing up for the 2010 general elections and needs to manage what he perceives as an angry Bosniak population.

Comment

¶ 7. (C) Although the Serbs are quiet for now, we can expect to see Dodik attempt to cast the length of time it took for the HighRep to use the Bonn Powers, as well as his failure to sanction Dodik directly, as evidence that he and the RS are capable of taking a powerful stand against the international community and "winning." Given Dodik's enduring popularity in the RS, this should not be a difficult objective to

SARAJEVO 00000773 003 OF 003

achieve. Moreover, for now, he is outwitting the Bosniaks, particularly Tihic. By keeping quiet on the conclusions and making a show of expressing their desire to continue with the Prud process, Dodik is managing to find a sympathetic ear among some Europeans when he claims that Tihic is causing more of a problem for the state than the Serbs. We need to convey to Tihic that while we support his condemnation of Dodik's anti-Dayton activity and insults aimed at Tihic, Tihic's public criticism of the HighRep are unhelpful to us and to him, and they are playing into Dodik's hands. As this is a high-profile month for Tihic -- with the PIC and two Congressional delegations visiting Bosnia -- we need to encourage him to weigh carefully the messages he chooses to send.

ENGLISH